

RHYTHM READING ROUTINES

A S.H.O.P. Talk
with
Ideas for Daily Rhythm Reading Work with Young Ensembles

The 71st Annual Midwest Clinic
Wednesday, December 20, 2017, 4:00 – 4:30 pm, Meeting Room W180

Rhonda Rhodes, DMA
Dixie State University
St. George, Utah
(rhodes@dixie.edu)

All of these ideas (and a myriad of others you may think of) make use of large rhythm flash cards printed on cardstock and laminated. I suggest making the cards at least 9'x13' so they can be easily seen. If you have a magnetized board, put sturdy magnets on the back of each flash card. The cards used in the demonstration are enlargements of materials available from Layton Music

(<https://laytonmusic.wordpress.com/2007/12/19/rhythm-flashcards/>)

These routines are NOT conducted, but are “counted off.” You can start them from anywhere in your rehearsal space - - preferably NOT from the podium. I encourage you to stand or sit among your students and look at the board with them.

Rhythm Grid Use (Cards are placed on the board in a 3x3 grid. Grid rows are numbered 1, 2 and 3. Grid columns are labeled A, B and C.)

- *Assign Rows and/or Columns*
Ensemble or sections play assigned rows/columns as three-measure exercises. Layer with additional rows/columns as appropriate.
- *Card Isolation*
Ensemble or sections play rhythm cards called out by the director. (i.e., “Play card B-3”)
- *Name That Card*
A student plays a rhythm card of their choice from the grid. Other students identify which card was played.
- *Tic-Tac-Toe*
Students choose a row, column or diagonal line (forward OR backward) of three measures they wish to play. Everyone plays their choice at the same time and the same tempo. It is fun to add different chord tones to this. Students can choose between chord tones of a major/minor triad.

- *Rhythm “Drill-Down”*

Single Card Use

- *Heads Up Rhythm* (A variation on “Heads Up Charades”)
Hold a stack of rhythm cards slightly above your head, the rhythms facing out toward the ensemble. Make sure the students know you haven't looked at the rhythm they see. Ask the group to play the rhythm on your count-off. The goal for them is to play the rhythm clear enough that you can describe it back to them after one hearing.
- *Now You See It, Now You Don't*
Show a rhythm card to the ensemble. Give them a few seconds to silently concentrate on it and imagine what it will sound like. Put the card down, give the group a count off, and have them play it.

Straight Line Use

- *Backward and Forward*
Using as many rhythm cards as you like, have students read through a row of cards from left to right, then from right to left – reversing each rhythm. Divide the group in half and have both directions performed at the same time.
- *Trade-Outs*
After the group has played a row of rhythm cards, have a student trade out one or two cards with others from a set of cards of similar difficulty. Or, simply switch positions of a couple of cards. Reverse the rhythm of a single card by turning it upside down. (You can do these things with the rhythm grid as well.)
- *One at a Time*
If you have a white board that moves in front of another board, put a line of rhythm cards on the board behind. Position the front board so only one card is visible. As the group is about to finish playing the first card; reveal the second card, and so on.
- *Combine Rhythms and Scale Patterns*

Other Suggestions:

Plan ahead and include cards of rhythm patterns that are in your literature. If you have the board space, leave cards on the board during the rehearsal and refer to them as needed.

Make sets of rhythm cards for different meters.

If you have percussion players in your classes, have a rhythm on the board made up of one or a set of rhythm cards. Have the percussionists play from the rhythm cards when the ensemble is playing long-tones.